

Message Text

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00002 192348Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8650

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEC 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 1532

3. THE BAABDA DECLARATION HAS ALREADY BECOME THE SUBJECT OF CONTROVERSY WITH ATTACKS COMING FROM PIERRE GENAYEL, ON ONE HAND, AND MUSLIMS AND LEFTISTS ON THE OTHER. A PORTION OF THIS CRITICISM IS PRO FORMA AND FOR THE RECORD. THE SYRIAN MEDIATORS HAVE BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN THEIR ROUNDS OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE CARPERS AND WE ANTICIPATE THAT THEY WILL ULTIMATELY BE ABLE TO "SELL" THE ACCORD. THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF THE LEBANESE POPULATION HARBOR DEEP-SEATED OBJECTIONS TO THE AGREEMENT; HOWEVER MUTED THEIR PUBLIC ANTIPATHY MAY BECOME, THESE ELEMENTS CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO SEEK FURTHER REFORMS IN THE FUTURE. NEITHER THE SHIITE MUSLIMS (WHO PROBABLY CONSTITUTE LEBANON'S LARGEST MINORITY) NOR THE DRUZE HAVE GAINED SUB-CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00002 192348Z

STANTIAL BENEFITS FROM THE ACCORDS. THE PROGRESSIVE FORCES, WHO HAVE SUBMITTED DETAILED REFORM PROPOSALS OF THEIR OWN, HAVE SEEN THEMSELVES SUBSTANTIALLY FROZEN OUT OF THE AGREEMENT (AND JUMBLATT HAS HAD THE DOOR

SLAMMED FIRMLY IN THE FACE OF HIS PERSONAL AMBITION TO BECOME PRIMIN). EVEN CONSERVATIVE SUNNI MUSLIMS WHO HOPED FOR A MORE DECISIVE SHIFT OF POWER IN THEIR DIRECTION CAN POINT TO ONLY MINIMAL GAINS. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT SUCH DISGRUNTLED ELEMENTS, EVEN IF THEY ACCEPT THE BROAD OUTLINES OF THE PRESENT AGREEMENT, WILL FALL BACK TO REFIGHT THEIR BATTLES DURING THE IMPLEMENTATIONS PHASE OF THE PROCESS (I.E., IN GIVING CONCRETE FROM TO THE PROMISED REFORMS). THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PRESENT AGREEMENT CAN BE MADE TO STICK DEPENDS UPON THE EFFORT AND MUSCLE THE SYRIANS ARE PREPARED TO EXERT IN ITS BEHALF.

4. THERE IS AS YET NO RPT NO LEBANESE CONSENSUS ON HOW TO PROCEED FROM THE PRESENT POINT TO BREATHE LIFE INTO THE AGREEMENT. IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THE PROGRAM AS A WHOLE WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE PARLIAMENT AND THAT IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION RE SPECIFIC ITEMS WILL BE FRAMED FOR LATER PRESENTATION. WE UNDERSTAND FROM SOURCES IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE THAT A GROUP OF JURISTS AND LEGAL EXPERTS IS TO BE CONVOKED IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO STUDY THE DECLARATION AND MAKE PROPOSALS FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION. AT THIS TIME, HOWEVER, OMSY A FEW PROVISIONS (E.G., 55 PERCENT REQUIREMENT ON SECOND BALLOT FOR PRESIDENT) HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS REQUIRING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS APPEARS THAT MOST OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE LEBANESE SYSTEM CAN BE EFFECTED WITH NEW LAWS OR REVISION OF EXISTING REGULATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, THE DECCLARATION CLAIMS FOR ITSELF STATUS CO-QUAL TO THE UNWRITTEN NATIONAL COVENANT OF 1943.

5. IN CONCLUSION, SEVERAL INITIAL OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE AGREEMENT CAN BE MADE. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE MARONITE CHRISTIANS, FOR ALL THEIR PROTESTSTIONS AND DEMONSTRATIVE RELUCTANCE, HAVE REALLY NOT GIVEN UP A GREAT DEAL. THE OBERSE OF THIS STATEMENT IS, OF COURSE, THAT THE MUSLIMS HAVE NOT RPT NOT GAINED SUBSTANTIALLY, THERE
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00002 192348Z

IS EVIDENCE THAT THIS RELAIIZATION IS DAWNING ON BOTH SIDES, MAKING THE MUSLIMS MORE INCLINED TO PICK AT THE OUTER EDGES OF THE AGEEMENT AND THE CHRISTIANS MORE RECEPTIVE TO SYRIAN INFLUENCE WHICH MANY NOW ARE BEGINNING TO REGARD AS THE BEST GUARANTEE OF THEIR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES.

6. THE POLITICAL REFORMS PROPOSED CONFIRM RATHER THAN ELIMINATE THE CONFESSIONAL CHARACTER OF LEBANESE POLITICS. THE SINGLE BOW IN THE DIRECTIONEOF DECONFESSIONALIZATION IS IN CIVIL SERVICE POSTS BELOW RPT BELOW THE APPROXIMATELY 170 INFLUENTIAL POSITIONS AT THE DIRECTOR GENERAL LEVEL. IN THESE LESSER POSITIONS, THE OPENING OF CIVIL SERVICE JOBS

TO COMPETITIONS ON MERIT (IF INDEED THAT EVER COMES ABOUT)
WOULD PROBABLY INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF CHRISTIANS,
WHO ARE BETTER EDUCATED, IN THE MIDDLE GRADES.

7 THE OUTLINE OF REFORMS PUT FORWARD IN THE BAABDA
DECLARATION PER SE PROBABLY WILL NOT RPT NOT WREAK SUB-

STANTIAL CHANGES IN THE WORKINGS OF THE LEBANESE SYSTEM.
RATHER, THE BATTLE OF WILLS AND THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE
"HAVES" AND THE "HAVE NOTS" WILL NOW REVOLVE, IN THE
SHORT RUN, AROUND SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR REDISTRIBUTION
OF WEALTH AND INFLUENCE (I.E., FULFILLING OTHER COMMITMENTS
TO REFORM). OVER THE LONGER TERM, SUCH A SITUATION MAY

BE A PRESCRIPTION FOR FURTHER, BUT PERHAPS MORE MANAGE-
ABLE, TURMOIL IN LEBANON. FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE,
HOWEVER, THE SYRIAN MEDIATORS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SUCCESS-
FUL IN DIVERTING THE ATTENTION OF THE MAIN LEBANESE FACTIONS
FROM THE BATTLEGROUND TO THE POLITICAL ARENA AND THAT, IN
ITSELF, IS NO MEAN ACHIEVEMENT.

8. FINALLY, IT CAN BE SAID WITH SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE
THAT, LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES IN THIS CRUCIAL
PERIOD, THE LEBANESE POLITICOS--CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM,
RIGHT AND LEFT--WOULD PROBABLY SUCCEED IN DESTROYING
THE FRAGILE FRAMEWORK OF AGREEMENT THAT THE BADDDBA DEC-
LARATION REPRESENTS. KHADDAM AND HIS ASSOCIATES SHOW EVERY
SIGN OF RECOGNIZING THIS DANGER AND OF WORKING ASSIDUOUSLY
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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 00002 192348Z

TO CURB OR CONTAIN THE PETTY MANEUVERING FOR POLITICAL AD-
VANTAGE AND PUBLIC POSTURING THAT HAS ACCOMPANIED THE END
OF WIDESPREAD CIVIL STRIFE. WE UNDERSTAND AS OF FEB 18
THAT PRES ASAD HAS INSTRUCTED FOMIN KHADDAM AND HIS
COLLEAGUES TO DELAY THEIR RETURN TO DAMASCUS UNTIL THEY
ARE CERTAIN THAT ALL LEBANESE POLITICAL FACTIONS HAVE
COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL ACCOMMO-
DATION. ALTHOUGH PERSISTING INCIDENTS AND KIDNAPPINGS KEEP
POSSIBILITY OF GENERAL BREAKDOWN OF CEASEFIRE ALIVE, PROMUL-
GATION OF BADDDBA DECLARATION AND MERE PASSAGE OF TIME TEND
TO FORECLOSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESORT TO ARMS NO MATTER
HOW UNHAPPY ONE OR ANOTHER POLITICAL FACTION MAY BE WITH
THE TERMS OF REFERENCE SET FORTH.
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